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HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-third session

REPORT OF THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

(Geneva, 5 to 9 October 1992)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its forty-third session at the Palais des Nations at Geneva from 5 to 9 October 1992. The session was opened by the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Bernard de Riedmatten (Switzerland). He began by giving a special welcome to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, and conveyed to her the appreciation of the Executive Committee for continuing to discharge with wisdom and leadership the heavy mandate conferred upon her by the international community.

2. Ambassador de Riedmatten described the year following the forty-second session of the Executive Committee as one of marked contrasts. Bright spots were provided by progress achieved in voluntary repatriation movements and repeated demonstrations of international solidarity, while a darker side could be seen in the troubling political destabilization prevailing in certain regions of the world, the growing number of persons who have been forced to flee their countries, often under tragic circumstances, and the denial of certain basic human rights.

3. In a world in flux, UNHCR is daily confronted with considerable challenges which severely test the Office's capacity to react and adapt. Recalling the commemoration ceremony of UNHCR's fortieth anniversary, the Ambassador exhorted delegates to draw encouragement and inspiration from the reminiscences on that occasion of previous High Commissioners, who depicted an institution that has never ceased to adjust its structures and activities in a pragmatic manner to an evolving political climate and new problems. With the political will to succeed in meeting such challenges, they were able to marshall appropriate responses and mobilize the resources necessary to implement them.

4. The myriad challenges facing the international community today are particularly difficult. Notable among these are the unprecedented size of migratory flows, the complexity of relief operations which join the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations, the difficulty of mobilizing financial resources in a time of budgetary restrictions, and the need to adapt international institutions and their governing mechanisms to a profoundly changed environment. Ambassador de Riedmatten expressed confidence in the ability of the international community to adjust the mechanisms and means at its disposal to respond to contemporary challenges.

5. Referring to his visits to refugee camps in Cambodia, Thailand and Bangladesh, Ambassador de Riedmatten cited a number of impressions he had received which appeared to accord with the preoccupations of the Executive Committee: the tragic fate of those forced to flee their homes, the considerable burden shouldered by receiving countries and the consequent need for burden-sharing, the social tensions and economic impact which sometimes result from the presence of refugees, the complexity of managing camps or implementing voluntary repatriation operations and the sense of responsibility and sacrifice on the part of the staff of UNHCR and its implementing partners.

6. The Ambassador concluded by thanking all those who had assisted him in carrying out his role as Chairman of the Executive Committee.

A. Election of officers

7. Under rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Ambassador Juan Archibaldo Lanus (Argentina)

Vice-Chairman: Ambassador Johan Frederik Boddens-Hosang (Netherlands)

Rapporteur: Mr. Ahmed A. Gubartalla (Sudan)

B. Representation on the Committee

8. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela.

9. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, Costa Rica, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Spain, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Ukraine, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

The Sovereign Order of Malta was also represented by an observer.

10. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT), United Nations Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Bank.

11. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers:

African Development Bank, Commission of the European Communities, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, League of Arab States, Organization of African Unity.

12. The following other organizations which have received a standing invitation to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly as observers were represented at the session: Palestine.

13. The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) were also represented at the session.

14. A total of 87 non-governmental organizations were represented by observers.

C. Adoption of the Agenda and other Organizational Matters

15. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda (document A/AC.96/792):

1. Opening of the session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

4. General debate.

5. (a) Review of UNHCR programmes financed by voluntary funds in 1991-1992; adoption of the 1993 General Programmes and budget.

(b) Status of contributions and overall financial requirements for 1992 and 1993.

(c) Administration and Management.

6. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee.

7. Any other business.

8. Adoption of the draft report of the forty-third session.

9. Closing of the session.

D. Opening Statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

16. In his opening statement, His Excellency Mr. Juan Archibaldo Lanus (Argentina) recalled that, when the Office of the High Commissioner was established in 1951, it was felt that three years would have been sufficient to resolve the problems of a small group of persons who had been displaced as a consequence of the Second World War. Forty years later, the international community is still trying to find solutions to the refugee problem. The word "refugee" evokes, today, a far different reality from the problem which existed decades ago, both in terms of magnitude, as well as the different type of displacement now occurring. UNHCR is faced with increasing responsibilities which go beyond the assistance and protection role envisaged in the existing legal instruments.

17. The Ambassador drew attention to the increase from 1 million refugees at the beginning of the 1950s to over 18 million today. The refugee problem is no longer a regional phenomenon but has become a priority item on the agenda of the international community, encompassing all the regions of the globe. The reasons for human displacement have, in recent years, gone beyond those contemplated in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. In some instances flight is related to fear of indiscriminate warfare taking place, for the most part, in an agonizing economic and social climate; in others, persons have been fleeing chronic natural or ecological disasters. Since it would be premature to consider modifying existing legal instruments, the Ambassador suggested that it would be more useful to direct thinking toward practical approaches, such as providing the High Commissioner with flexible "guidelines" or international "understandings" enabling UNHCR to fulfil its humanitarian activities.

18. The Ambassador observed that the High Commissioner's Office has had the courage to carry out humanitarian activities even where these have gone beyond the ambit of the legal instruments, according more importance to human life than to legal texts. He believed that, within the United Nations system, UNHCR is the institution which has assumed its moral responsibilities with the greatest conviction and thanked the High Commissioner for her courage in this respect. This moral dimension has enabled her to take action under difficult circumstances with political impartiality, interceding with Governments, where necessary, intervening in complicated voluntary repatriation programmes, and providing assistance to human beings who are faced with the most agonizing of circumstances: the need to flee because of fear of physical violence, persecution and lack of freedom. He quoted the Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, who reflected that "it was a great privilege to live in an era in which history is being rewritten". The Ambassador remarked that the present time is one of those moments of change in terms not only of events but also of concepts and ideas.

19. In conclusion, the Ambassador said he believed that, within the new international framework, the activities which UNHCR was undertaking should fulfil not only a humanitarian function but also serve to promote peace, security and solidarity.

II. GENERAL (items 4 to 9)

20. The High Commissioner's opening statement to the Executive Committee is reproduced in the annex to the present report. The full account of the deliberations of the Committee, including the statements or other interventions made by delegations on all the agenda items of the meeting, as well as the closing statements by the Chairman and the High Commissioner, are contained in the summary records A/AC.96/SR.472 to A/AC.96/SR.479.

III. DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Conclusions and Decisions on International Protection

1. General Conclusion on International Protection

21. The Executive Committee,

(a) Reaffirms the primary nature of the High Commissioner's protection responsibilities which are performed as a non-political, humanitarian and social function within the framework of international refugee law and applicable regional instruments, with due regard for human rights and humanitarian law, and which necessitate cooperation with UNHCR, as well as among and between States in accordance with the United Nations Charter, on a basis of international responsibilities, solidarity and burden-sharing;

(b) Notes the recent accessions by Albania, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Honduras, and the notification of succession by Slovenia to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol without geographic limitation, and encourages other States to accede to these instruments in order to promote further international cooperation in responding to and resolving refugee problems;

(c) Notes the value of reporting by States parties on implementation of their responsibilities under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, again urges States which have not yet done so to respond to the questionnaire on implementation circulated by the High Commissioner, and calls upon the High Commissioner and all States to work together to strengthen implementation, including through heightened promotional efforts, better monitoring arrangements and more harmonized application of the refugee definition criteria;

(d) Welcomes the strong commitment of States to continue receiving refugees and extending to them protection and assistance;

(e) Renews its expressions of deep concern regarding persistent problems in some countries or regions seriously jeopardizing the security or well-being of refugees, including numerous incidents of refoulement, expulsion, physical attacks on refugees and detention under unacceptable conditions, and calls upon States to take all measures necessary to ensure respect for the fundamental principles of refugee protection;

(f) Reaffirms the primary importance of the principles of non-refoulement and asylum as basic to refugee protection;

(g) Notes that effective and expeditious status determination procedures and access to them should be maintained by States with the advice and assistance of UNHCR, just as clear and intentional misuse of these procedures should be actively discouraged and recalls in this regard its Conclusion No. 65(XLII), in particular paragraphs (n) and (o);

(h) Expressed concern about the lack of adequate international protection for various groups of refugees in different parts of the world, including a large number of Palestinians, and hoped that efforts would continue within the United Nations systems to address their protection needs;

(i) Expresses appreciation for the progress report on the implementation of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/74), notes with great concern the precarious situation of many refugee women, whose physical safety is often endangered and who often do not have equal access to basic necessities including adequate health and educational facilities, and calls upon all States, UNHCR and other concerned parties to ensure implementation of the Guidelines, particularly through measures aimed at eliminating all forms of sexual exploitation of and violence against refugee women, protecting women heads of household, and promoting their active participation and involvement in decisions affecting their lives and communities;

(j) Reaffirms its Conclusion No. 64 (XLI) on Refugee Women and International Protection, and calls upon the High Commissioner to pursue her efforts to increase public awareness of the rights and protection needs of refugee women and girls, inter alia, through further sensitization of bodies concerned with the status of women, and by promoting and supporting the inclusion of the issue of the rights of refugee women on the international human rights agenda;

(k) Encourages the High Commissioner to ensure that specific attention to refugee women's issues becomes an integral part of refugee protection and requests her also to ensure that the protection situation of both refugee women and of refugee children is included in the plan of work for forthcoming meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection;

(l) Reiterates the importance accorded by the Committee to the protection and well-being of refugee children, in particular unaccompanied minors, and welcomes the appointment of a Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children as an important element in strengthening the implementation of the Guidelines on Refugee Children and in coordinating efforts on behalf of refugee children by States and other international and non-governmental organizations;

(m) Notes, however, with concern, the dimension and complexity of the present refugee problem, the potential risk of new refugee situations developing in some countries or regions and the challenges confronting refugee protection due to the constantly changing global political, social and economic climate;

(n) Commends, therefore, the initiative of the High Commissioner in convening the internal Working Group on International Protection, whose recommendations were reflected in the Note on International Protection which provides a useful basis for practical approaches to meet new and multifaceted protection challenges, so that persons of concern to the High Commissioner receive the protection required by their situation;

(o) Takes note of the fact that UNHCR's broad humanitarian expertise and experience have proved to be an appropriate basis for the Office to explore new options or undertake new protection activities, in specific situations, in the areas of asylum, prevention and solutions, consistent with requests to it, where required, with the fundamental protection principles, and with its mandate, and in coordination with other United Nations organs;

(p) Supports, in this connection, strengthened efforts by the High Commissioner to explore further approaches encompassing early warning, training, advisory services and promotion of human rights and of development, in conformity with her mandate and responsibilities, within an inter-agency, intergovernmental and non-governmental framework as appropriate, to prevent conditions giving rise to refugee exoduses;

(q) Supports also efforts of the High Commissioner, on the basis of specific requests from the Secretary-General or the competent principal organs of the United Nations and with the consent of the concerned State, to undertake activities in favour of internally displaced persons, taking into account the complementarities of mandates and expertise of other relevant organizations;

(r) Recognizes, in this regard, that new approaches should not undermine the institution of asylum, as well as other basic protection principles, notably the principle of non-refoulement;

(s) Reaffirms that voluntary repatriation of refugees is the preferred solution, where feasible, and endorses UNHCR's efforts to work actively to create, from the outset of a refugee problem, conditions conducive to voluntary return in safety and dignity. The success of this solution will depend on a number of factors, including assurances of safety on return, access arrangements and monitoring possibilities for UNHCR, the adequacy of reception arrangements and reintegration possibilities;

(t) Reaffirms the important role of resettlement as an instrument of protection and as a durable solution in specific circumstances and, in this connection, calls on Governments for special flexibility and accelerated departures for compelling protection cases and vulnerable groups identified by the Office;

(u) Acknowledges that the realization of solutions in a growing number of mass outflow situations is much facilitated where these are made an integral part of a comprehensive plan of action, which balances the interests of affected States and the rights and needs of individuals and, accordingly, encourages UNHCR to work together with States and other interested

organizations to explore new solutions-oriented approaches, which might include temporary protection and necessary arrangements for burden-sharing, when a situation so requires;

(v) Notes the importance of promotion of refugee law as an element of emergency preparedness, as well as to facilitate prevention of and solutions to refugee problems, and calls upon the High Commissioner to continue to strengthen the Office's promotion and training activities;

(w) Deplores ethnic and other forms of intolerance as one of the major causes of forced migratory movements, at the same time expresses its concern regarding xenophobia in segments of the population in a number of countries receiving refugees and asylum-seekers which has exposed them to considerable danger and, therefore, calls upon States and UNHCR to continue to work actively to promote broader understanding throughout national communities of the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers;

(x) Takes note of the important contribution being made by the High Commissioner to concerned international bodies and requests her to continue to seek expanded cooperation with these bodies, such as UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, UNEP, the Centre for Human Rights, the Commission on Human Rights, IOM and ICRC, and thereby, inter alia, to promote broadened awareness of the link between refugees and human rights, as well as development and environmental issues;

(y) Reiterates its call to States and relevant international agencies actively to explore and promote measures favourable to stateless persons and, recognizing the absence of an international body with a general mandate for these persons, calls upon the High Commissioner to continue her efforts generally on behalf of stateless individuals and to work actively to promote adherence to and implementation of the international instruments relating to statelessness.

2. Conclusion on Cessation of Status

22. The Executive Committee,

Recalling Conclusion No. 65 (XLII) which, inter alia, underlined the possibility of use of the cessation clauses in Article IC (5) and (6) of the 1951 Convention in situations where a change of circumstances in a country is of such a profound and enduring nature that refugees from that country no longer require international protection, and can no longer continue to refuse to avail themselves of the protection of their country, provided that it is recognized that compelling reasons may, for certain individuals, support the continuation of refugee status,

Taking into account that the application of the cessation clause(s) in the 1951 Convention rests exclusively with the Contracting States, but that the High Commissioner should be appropriately involved, in keeping with the role of the High Commissioner in supervising the application of the provisions of the 1951 Convention as provided for in Article 35 of that Convention,

Noting that any declaration by the High Commisioner that the competence accorded to her by the Statute of her Office with regard to certain refugees shall cease to apply, may be useful to States in connection with the application of the cessation clauses as well as the 1951 Convention,

Believing that a careful approach to the application of the cessation clauses using clearly established procedures is necessary so as to provide refugees with the assurance that their status will not be subject to unnecessary review in the light of temporary changes, not of a fundamental character, in the situation prevailing in the country of origin,

(a) Stresses that, in taking any decision on application of the cessation clauses based on "ceased circumstances", States must carefully assess the fundamental character of the changes in the country of nationality or origin, including the general human rights situation, as well as the particular cause of fear of persecution, in order to make sure in an objective and verifiable way that the situation which justified the granting of refugee status has ceased to exist;

(b) Underlines that an essential element in such assessment by States is the fundamental, stable and durable character of the changes, making use of appropriate information available in this respect, inter alia, from relevant specialized bodies, including particularly UNHCR;

(c) Emphasizes that the "ceased circumstances" cessation clauses shall not apply to refugees who continue to have a well-founded fear of persecution;

(d) Recognizes therefore that all refugees affected by a group or class decision to apply these cessation clauses must have the possibility, upon request, to have such application in their cases reconsidered on grounds relevant to their individual case;

(e) Recommends, so as to avoid hardship cases, that States seriously consider an appropriate status, preserving previously acquired rights, for persons who have compelling reasons arising out of previous persecution for refusing to re-avail themselves of the protection of their country and recommends also that appropriate arrangements, which would not put into jeopardy their established situation, be similarly considered by relevant authorities for those persons who cannot be expected to leave the country of asylum, due to a long stay in that country resulting in strong family, social and economic links there;

(f) Recommends that States, in giving effect to a decision to invoke the cessation clauses, should in all situations deal humanely with the consequences for the affected individuals or groups, and that countries of asylum and countries of origin should together facilitate the return, to assure that it takes place in a fair and dignified manner. Where appropriate, return and reintegration assistance should be made available to the returnees by the international community, including through relevant international agencies.

3. Decision on Inter-sessional meetings

23. The Executive Committee,

Noting with appreciation the Background Note on Inter-sessional Meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection (document EC/SC/72),

(a) Decides to request the High Commissioner to convene at least one inter-sessional meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection to continue constructive discussions on relevant protection issues;

(b) Decides further to request the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee at its forty-fourth session on progress in the deliberations of the Sub-Committee.

B. Conclusion on Repatriation to Afghanistan

24. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the relevant portion of Part V of document A/AC.96/793 on UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds,

Reaffirming that voluntary repatriation has been recognized by numerous UNHCR Executive Committee conclusions as the most favourable durable solution,

Being cognizant of the importance of the responsibility of UNHCR to make voluntary repatriation feasible and create conditions conducive to safe and voluntary return,

Recalling that five million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran constitute the largest refugee population in the world,

(a) Welcomes the progress achieved in the voluntary repatriation from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran of more than one million refugees during 1992;

(b) Notes with concern that armed conflicts in certain parts of Afghanistan, and massive internal displacement of persons from the capital, jeopardize the successful reintegration of returnees and may lead to widespread human suffering and a humanitarian crisis during the coming winter months;

(c) Notes with concern that due to lack of sufficient funding there has not been a commensurate response in terms of humanitarian assistance following the unprecedented pace of repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan;

(d) Calls upon all parties to redouble their efforts to achieve peace, which would facilitate the delivery of immediate humanitarian assistance, thereby enabling returnees and internally displaced to resume a normal life;

(e) Urges all members of the international community, as well as international and non-governmental organizations, to assist the current repatriation movement which itself paves the way towards the restoration of normal life in Afghanistan;

(f) Urges the international community to contribute generously to humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan, including the repatriation operation from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as to ensure that adequate assistance reaches the substantial number of refugees still remaining in both countries.

C. Conclusion on the Refugee Situation in Africa

25. The Executive Committee,

Addressing itself to the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa,

(a) Notes with concern that internal conflicts, insecurity and the resultant disintegration of the institutions and law and order continue to cause or add to massive displacements, internally and externally, in some countries on the continent; to impair access to and the delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees, returnees and, where applicable, internally displaced persons; to prevent the attainment of durable solutions to the problem of refugees when otherwise conditions are ripe; and to threaten the lives and safety of refugees as well as of the personnel and property of humanitarian organizations assisting them;

(b) Calls upon the High Commissioner acting in concert, as appropriate, with the relevant States, other parties, regional organizations, organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to continue her initiatives to address the root causes of population displacements and find solutions to the problems of refugees, returnees and, where applicable, internally displaced persons, including efforts to contribute towards the well-being of refugees and to develop, whenever required, modalities to gain access to and deliver protection and assistance to the affected populations in conformity with the mandate of UNHCR;

(c) Recognizes that there are situations where refugees and returnees live amongst or side-by-side with other populations also in need of some protection and assistance, such as victims of famine or drought, demobilized military personnel, internally displaced or affected populations, and victims of extreme hardship, for whom the High Commissioner has no direct competence and encourages the High Commissioner to initiate or undertake action, programmes or approaches, in cooperation with other agencies, receiving countries and donor states, to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the hosting community are comprehensively met, thereby ensuring a reduction in tensions, the more effective discharge of her humanitarian mandate, as well as helping to reduce the imperative for persons to seek or be forced into asylum elsewhere;

(d) Commends, in this connection, innovative approaches undertaken by UNHCR, States and other parties, inter alia, to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, emphasizes in this respect the importance of proper coordination with other organizations involved in humanitarian operations in these areas and calls upon the relevant States and all other parties or entities to facilitate the concerned humanitarian activities and operations of UNHCR and its implementing partners, including where these have of necessity to be carried out between or across borders;

(e) Notes with appreciation that African States continue to admit refugees into their territories and to practise generous asylum policies despite developments or situations which have the cumulative effect of worsening or limiting an effective response to the refugee problem in Africa, including, in some cases, the limited availability of land to accommodate and enable the socio-economic integration and reintegration, respectively, of refugees and returnees, the shortage of water, health, education and logistic infrastructure, limited financial resources available to UNHCR to implement fully its mandated responsibilities for the benefit of refugees and returnees, and environmental degradation arising from the presence of large populations of refugees;

(f) Notes with concern specific national policies or practices which seriously compromise the safety, security or dignity of the refugees or which produce refugees or refugee-like situations; denial to UNHCR of access to or the opportunity to systematically protect, assist and find solutions for certain refugees, and, in this respect, calls upon the relevant States to take the necessary actions effectively to address and remedy these matters;

(g) Expresses appreciation to the High Commissioner for her efforts to promote and facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of South African refugees and exiles, urges her to continue these initiatives in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent where the conditions for voluntary repatriation are ripe, and calls upon all parties concerned to overcome the obstacles to successful implementation of voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees in all these instances;

(h) Emphasizes, in this connection, the importance of providing to UNHCR sufficiently, and on a timely basis, the necessary financial resources to implement, in cooperation with other relevant organizations, all aspects of voluntary repatriation and reintegration in conformity with its mandate, calls for, under appropriate arrangements, special assistance and measures, in particular, from States, and the relevant organizations of the United Nations for the systematic clearance of land mines and other unexploded ordnance and munitions in areas of potential large-scale repatriation, deplores, and urges the immediate cessation of, policies, practices or attitudes which have prevented refugees from exercising their right to return, as well as instances of arrest, detention, intimidation, harassment, brutality, torture and killings, including of family members and relatives, to which some returnees have been subjected.

(i) Notes with deep appreciation the recent agreement on the peace accord between the Mozambican Government and RENAMO and calls upon the High Commissioner to promote and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Mozambican refugees, when appropriate, consistent with the principle of return in safety and dignity, and their reintegration back in their society.

D. Conclusion on the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA)

26. The Executive Committee,

(a) Reaffirms its support for the fundamental principles underlying the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees;

(b) Notes with satisfaction the continued progress that has been achieved in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action, in particular, the reduction in the number of clandestine departures, the promotion of regular departures, the resettlement of those recognized as refugees and the determination of refugee status of asylum-seekers in countries of first asylum;

(c) Notes with satisfaction that over 30,000 Vietnamese have returned to their country of origin under the auspices of UNHCR, in conditions of safety and dignity, supports the ongoing UNHCR monitoring and reintegration assistance programme in Viet Nam, and reiterates the importance attached to the responsibility of States towards their own citizens and the return of persons determined not to be refugees to their country of origin in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of Action;

(d) Welcomes the further progress made at the Fifth Tripartite Thai/Lao/UNHCR Meeting in Rayong, Thailand, from 13-14 July 1992, on the repatriation of Laotian refugees and asylum-seekers and calls upon the High Commissioner to reinforce efforts for the return and reintegration of Laotian refugees and asylum-seekers from Thailand and China;

(e) Looks forward to the convening of future meetings of the Steering Committee of the Comprehensive Plan of Action to evaluate progress achieved in its implementation as well as to review the outstanding issues to be addressed;

(f) Calls upon the international community to continue to contribute generously to the Comprehensive Plan of Action including the reintegration programmes in both Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic until all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan of Action have been achieved.

E. Conclusion on Repatriation to Cambodia

27. The Executive Committee,

Recalling the conclusion on Repatriation to Cambodia adopted by the Executive Committee at its forty-second session,

Noting with satisfaction that, in accordance with the agreement on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict concluded in Paris on 23 October 1991 and the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Thai Government, the Supreme National Council of Cambodia, and UNHCR relating to the Repatriation of Cambodian Refugees and Displaced Persons from Thailand, signed in Phnom Penh on 21 November 1991, more than 130,000 persons have so far returned to Cambodia under the auspices of UNHCR from Thailand and other countries in the region,

Noting with appreciation the cooperation of all parties concerned resulting in the repatriation to Cambodia taking place in full accord with the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict and the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding, and expresses hope that the voluntary repatriation of all Cambodian refugees and displaced persons from Thailand will be completed by the end of March 1993 to ensure the returnees' full participation in the general elections in Cambodia, as envisioned in the said agreements,

Recognizing with appreciation the generous response of Member States and other donors to the Secretary-General's appeal of 1 October 1991 and his Consolidated Appeal of 14 February 1992,

Recognizing the serious environmental impact created by the large refugee presence over the past 13 years in the border area between Thailand and Cambodia,

Welcoming the successful establishment of a UNHCR/UNDP Joint Technical Management Unit in Phnom Penh and the implementation of a number of Quick Impact Projects benefiting both the returnees and the local populations,

(a) Calls upon UNDP and other multilateral organizations to maintain their engagement to the process of reintegration of returnees by following up on the process of Quick Impact Projects through sustainable and coordinated programmes of area development;

(b) Calls upon UNHCR, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General, to begin seeking donors' support in order to assist the Royal Thai Government in the restoration of the Cambodian population camp sites to the condition prevailing prior to the establishment of camps, after the completion of the repatriation, in accordance with provision 25 of the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding;

(c) Calls upon the international community to ensure that all financial needs of the repatriation operation are met and to continue its support to international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations assisting in the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons on a long-term basis.

F. Conclusion on the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA)

28. The Executive Committee,

Noting with satisfaction the outcome of the Second International Meeting of the CIREFCA Follow-up Committee, held in San Salvador on 7 and 8 April 1992 and the reaffirmation of political and financial support of the international community for the continuing efforts of the five Central American countries, Belize and Mexico, to find durable solutions for refugees, returnees and displaced persons, in accordance with the principles and objectives of the CIREFCA Concerted Plan of Action,

Having considered the document Update on the CIREFCA Process (A/AC.96/INF.176) prepared by UNHCR for the information of the Executive Committee,

Recognizing that the decision taken on that occasion to extend the duration of the CIREFCA Concerted Plan of Action by two years, until May 1994, will enable completion of ongoing and pending tasks related to the search for durable solutions for uprooted Central Americans and secure their full coverage in national development plans,

Recognizing that new institutional arrangements for technical support and follow-up of CIREFCA are now required on the part of UNHCR and UNDP in view of the special challenges posed by the integration/reintegration of uprooted Central Americans in line with the dynamics of the regional peace process and sustained economic development,

Taking note of the position of the seven convening countries expressed by the president of the CIREFCA Follow-up Committee during the forty-third session of the Executive Committee to reinforce the Joint Support Unit in order to ensure its effective functioning,

Recognizing further that most of the seven convening countries have initiated programmes for the protection, preservation and rehabilitation of the environment,

Recognizing the contribution, within the CIREFCA framework, of the Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE) in helping to alleviate the plight of uprooted Central Americans,

(a) Supports the Central American countries, Belize and Mexico, in their efforts on behalf of uprooted Central Americans, especially by promoting respect for fundamental protection and human rights principles and through inclusion of these populations in national development plans, in accordance with the CIREFCA Plan of Action;

(b) Urges the international community to continue its political support and confirm its financial support for both the humanitarian and development programmes on behalf of CIREFCA's target populations in view of the link between lasting durable solutions for uprooted Central Americans and the success of peace and democratization efforts in the region;

(c) Underlines its support for the proposed new inter-agency arrangements by UNHCR and UNDP for technical support and follow-up of CIREFCA which confer the lead-agency role to UNDP, from June 1993 for the remaining duration of the CIREFCA Plan of Action, to strengthen integration and reintegration processes;

(d) Calls upon the Governments of the convening countries and UNDP to ensure that, in order to strengthen the community-based focus of development programmes and facilitate their rapid implementation, special emphasis is given to the participation of the beneficiary populations, especially women, and to ensure that the efforts of Governments and international organizations, as well as the activities of NGOs, in the region are closely coordinated on behalf of beneficiary populations within the CIREFCA process;

(e) Calls upon the High Commissioner to continue her active and full participation in technical support and follow-up of CIREFCA for the duration of the process and suggests that UNHCR draws upon the valuable lessons of CIREFCA for other regions;

(f) Calls upon the international community to support programmes to protect and preserve the environment and ensure the necessary human and material resources from both humanitarian and development financial sources;

(g) Urges that coordination of the process for the transition period should be closely followed by the Joint Support Unit and the convening countries to guarantee the success of CIREFCA.

G. Conclusion on the former Yugoslavia

29. The Executive Committee,

Deploring the tragic events in the former Yugoslavia, and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have resulted in the extreme suffering and displacement of over three million persons and destruction on a massive scale,

Recalling that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has designated the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as the lead agency for humanitarian relief in the former Yugoslavia,

Welcoming the initiative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to convene on 29 July 1992 the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia and to propose the Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia, which includes the following elements: respect for human rights and humanitarian law; humanitarian access; preventive protection; measures for specific humanitarian needs; temporary protection; material assistance; return and rehabilitation,

Noting that the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Programme of Action and Appeal for former Yugoslavia was issued on 4 September 1992,

(a) Urges all Governments and parties concerned to ensure that the Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia is fully implemented, including all its individual constituent elements and complemented by political efforts;

(b) Calls upon Governments and the international donor community to contribute generously to the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Programme of Action and Appeal for former Yugoslavia.

H. Conclusions and Decisions on Refugee Women and Children

1. Refugee Women

30. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the Progress Report on Implementation of the Policy on Refugee Women (EC/SC.2/55) and the Information Note on Implementation of UNHCR's Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/74),

Recalling previous conclusions on refugee women of its thirty-ninth, fortieth, forty-first and forty-second sessions,

(a) Expresses appreciation for the Progress Report on the Implementation of the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women (EC/SC.2/55);

(b) Notes with satisfaction the continuation of the position of Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Women, financed through regular resources;

(c) Commends the Office of the High Commissioner on continued progress in implementing the Policy on Refugee Women in many regions of the world;

(d) Calls upon the High Commissioner to ensure active management support to integrate refugee women's issues throughout the planning, budgeting and delivery of protection and assistance programmes;

(e) Encourages follow-up to the initiatives undertaken to enhance the participation of uprooted women in Central America and Mexico through the First Regional Forum on Refugee, Returnee and Displaced Women (FOREFEM) within the context of the CIREFCA process, and suggests that the High Commissioner use this regional approach, where applicable, for addressing refugee women's issues in other parts of the world;

(f) Urges the High Commissioner to continue to expand People Oriented Planning training courses with particular emphasis on UNHCR programme and protection staff and on replication among implementing partners, and reiterates the goal that all UNHCR staff receive such training;

(g) Notes with serious concern that during the first stage of an emergency, community mobilization, particularly the participation of refugee women, has not been adequately addressed and requests UNHCR to undertake appropriate remedial action in this regard;

(h) Stresses the ongoing need to implement and monitor more fully the Policy on Refugee Women (A/AC.96/754) and the Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/67);

(i) Notes the importance of placing female staff in field locations;

(j) Requests the High Commissioner to provide at the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee a further progress report on implementation of the Policy on Refugee Women, with appropriate attention to the special problems of refugee women heads of household and physical protection.

2. Refugee Children

31. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the Information Note on Refugee Children (EC/SC.2/54),

(a) Welcomes the appointment of the Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Children, and calls upon the High Commissioner to continue to ensure active management support to mainstream refugee children's issues throughout the planning and delivery of protection and assistance programmes;

(b) Welcomes the steps taken to strengthen the cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations organizations, other inter-governmental organizations and the non-governmental community on matters related to refugee children, and encourages the High Commissioner to continue her efforts to develop further this cooperation, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and assure the incorporation of the special needs of refugee children in the various programme activities of these organizations;

(c) Notes with concern the poor nutritional condition of refugee children in some refugee situations and the impact on the health of these children, and calls on the international community to provide adequate assistance to ensure that the basic nutritional needs of refugee children are met; and urges UNHCR and its operational partners to continue to monitor the quantity and quality of food supplied and consumed in refugee feeding operations, and in particular the nutritional condition of refugee children;

(d) Asks that the basic primary education needs of refugee children be better addressed and that, even in the early stages of emergencies, educational requirements be identified so that prompt attention may be given to such needs;

(e) Notes with concern the high drop-out rates among refugee children, especially girls, prevailing in many refugee schools, and urges UNHCR to take steps to encourage and facilitate the retention of children at school, with special attention to refugee girls;

(f) Supports steps to alleviate the impact of war and of prolonged stay in camps on refugee children, especially through initiatives to identify early symptoms of trauma and to facilitate assistance to those affected;

(g) Encourages UNHCR to participate in the preparatory process for the International Year of The Family 1994 with a view to highlighting the importance of the refugee family as a vital support structure for its most vulnerable members, in particular, refugee children including unaccompanied minors, and to facilitate family reunion, where determined to be in the best interests of the child;

(h) Welcomes initiatives to present UNHCR Guidelines on Refugee Children in a revised format and encourages UNHCR to formulate targeted training programmes and to develop additional training material on refugee children to be used with existing programmes;

(i) Requests the High Commissioner to present a policy paper on refugee children to the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee, and to report on activities and measures taken by UNHCR to improve the situation of refugee children;

(j) Recognizes that the full implementation of standards set forth in the Guidelines on Refugee Children implies the appropriate allocation of resources, calls on UNHCR to approve programme budgets accordingly and appeals to the international community to be supportive of UNHCR in this regard.

I. Decisions on Programme, Administrative and Financial Matters

1. General Decision on Administrative and Financial Matters

32. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the information contained in UNHCR Activities financed by Voluntary Funds: Report for 1991-1992 and proposed Programmes and Budget for 1993 (document A/AC.96/793 (Parts I-VI); the Overview of UNHCR Activities: Report for 1991-1992 (A/AC.96/798); the Update of UNHCR Programme and Funding Projections for 1992 and 1993 (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.18); and the note on UNHCR Evaluation Activities (A/AC.96/794),

Having taken note of the Voluntary Funds accounts for the year 1991 (A/AC.96/796) and the Report of the United Nations Board of Auditors thereon (A/AC.96/797) and the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the Audit Report (A/AC.96/797/Add. 1),

Welcoming the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on UNHCR Activities financed by Voluntary Funds: Report for 1991-1992 and the proposed Budget for 1993 (A/AC.96/800),

Noting the documentation on UNHCR's Emergency Response Capacity (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.15), Refugee Statistics (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.16), the Classification of Activities/Categorization of Posts: PSA/PPE (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.17), Voluntary Repatriation Programmes: 1992 (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.19), and on the Status of Women in UNHCR (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.21),

Noting that a number of Executive Committee members in the light of recent developments consider it likely that the proposed 1993 General Programmes total allocations of $ 378,249,000 will prove insufficient to meet still evolving needs for refugee situations currently provided for under the 1993 General Programme,

Mindful also of the need for enhanced flexibility in the allocation of funds under General Programmes in view of increasing demands on the Office,

(a) Reaffirms the value of the inter-sessional meetings of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters as a means of assuring timely governance for the Office's administrative, financial and operational activities, and recommends that a minimum of two such meetings be convened between the annual meetings of the Executive Committee;

(b) Approves the country and area programmes and the overall allocations for the 1993 General Programmes amounting to $ 378,249,000 (including $ 20 million for the Emergency Fund) as contained in document A/AC.96/793 (Parts I to VI), and as shown in column 8 of Summary Table 2 of document A/AC.96/798;

(c) Requests UNHCR to present at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters any revised programme and contigency needs under the 1993 General Programmes and an assessment of funding prospects for the 1993 General Programmes, including the Programme Reserve, General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation, and Emergency Fund;

(d) Authorizes the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters to formulate at its next meeting recommendations for a possible revision of the 1993 General Programme for the Executive Committee to act upon urgently;

(e) Requests the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters to pursue the review of its categorization of activities between General and Special Programmes, their inter-relationship and other relevant funding-related issues;

(f) Authorizes the High Commissioner to effect such adjustments in projects, country or area programmes and overall allocations, as may be required by changes affecting the refugee or returnee programmes for which they were planned, using the General Programmes Reserve where necessary, and to report such adjustments to the Executive Committee at its forty-fourth session;

(g) Approves the transfer in 1992 and 1993 of up to $ 200,000 and $ 400,000, respectively, from the General Programmes Reserve to the Fund for International Field Staff Housing and Basic Amenities;

(h) Urges the High Commissioner, in view of the changed situation that the Office now faces, in particular the increasing demands being made on the Office and the related increases in administrative expenditures that are a proper charge to the Regular Budget, to enter into negotiations with the

Secretary-General to proceed with the transfer of the already agreed posts of chiefs of missions in 17 designated Least Developed Countries from UNHCR voluntary funding to the Regular Budget as from the biennium 1994-1995, notwithstanding the fact that it was formerly agreed that no further proposals for the transfer of posts to the Regular Budget would be made before 1999;

(i) Expresses its appreciation for the very strong donor support to UNHCR and, in view of the sustained demands on the Office, calls on donors to continue their support so as to assure the timely and full funding of current activities as well as those programmed for 1993, especially priority activities grouped under General Programmes, it being understood that their implementation is subject to the availability of voluntary contributed funds;

(j) Renews its appeal for the early announcement of pledges, particularly at the Pledging Conference, so as to facilitate the planning and implementation of activities, and asks that pledges, if earmarked, be done so in the broadest possible way;

(k) Reiterates its call to those Governments which do not contribute to UNHCR or which could increase their contributions, and are in a position to do so, to provide financial support in a spirit of international burden-sharing;

(l) Notes with concern the observations of the Board of Auditors in relation to management issues, especially those dealing with financial management and control systems, and urges UNHCR to take additional steps to further enhance its internal control procedures and those of its operational partners;

(m) Welcomes the recommendations both of the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in relation to the establishment within the Internal Audit Division of a truly UNHCR-dedicated audit unit in Geneva to ensure adequate and effective coverage of UNHCR programmes and related activities, and calls on the High Commissioner to enter into discussions with the Secretary-General to assure their timely implementation;

(n) Underlines the importance of professional and independent evaluation activities, both internal and external, as a management tool which can contribute to greater efficiency and effectiveness in UNHCR programmes;

(o) Renews its request to the High Commissioner to ensure that the importance attached to evaluation activities be reflected in the timely consideration of and the appropriate follow-up to the findings of the Office's Central Evaluation Section, and welcomes in this regard the decision of the High Commissioner to follow-up on the recommendations of the Evaluation Unit with regard to the need for prioritization of UNHCR's activities in Europe and to related redeployment of staff resources;

(p) Notes the steps taken by UNHCR to improve the documentation presented to the Executive Committee, and urges UNHCR to highlight more clearly (i) the relationship between country/area priorities and programme proposals and budgetary estimates, and (ii) the relationship between country

programme proposals and policies and guidelines approved by the Executive Committee on the protection of refugee women and on refugee children, as well as to examine closely the additional recommendations of the ACABQ (A/AC.96/800), with a view to consulting with the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters at its next session on this issue;

(q) Welcomes the document on the Status of Women in UNHCR (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.21) and expresses its appreciation to the High Commissioner for the promulgation of policy guidelines for the improvement of the status of women in UNHCR and asks the Office to keep the Sub-Committee informed of progress in the formulation of an implementation plan for these guidelines;

(r) Recognizes the difficulties associated with the compilation of refugee statistics but, given the importance of such statistics especially for gender-sensitive programme planning, urges UNHCR to pursue the proposals as set out in its Information Note on UNHCR's Refugee Statistics (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.16) and to provide the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters at one of its inter-sessional meetings with presently available statistical data;

(s) Notes the paper on the Classification of Activities/Categorization of Posts (PSA/PPE) (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.17) and the comments of the ACABQ thereon, and requests UNHCR to submit to the Sub-Committee in the first part of 1993 the preliminary results of its exercise of presenting all posts according to the proposed categories: Executive Direction and Management, Substantive Posts, Operational Posts and Support Posts;

(t) Welcomes the Note on UNHCR's Emergency Response Capacity (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.15) and expresses appreciation for the progress described therein, and urges the High Commissioner to continue her efforts to strengthen the Office's emergency response capability, particularly on a regional basis, by extending the range of stand-by agreements with Government authorities, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations and to take any further steps that might be necessary for the training, mobilization and release of UNHCR staff for emergency operations in order to ensure a flexible, effective and rapid response to emergencies including presentation of relevant features of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and Guidelines on Refugee Children in a format more easily usable by emergency field staff;

(u) With regard to plans to republish the UNHCR Handbook on Emergencies, requests the Office to expand existing aspects of protection for women and children now found in the Handbook to include more complete information found in the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and the Guidelines on Refugee Children, perhaps by using the new format described above;

(v) Encourages the Office to build on the close working relationship already established with the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and his Department for Humanitarian Affairs so as to assure a coordinated and effective response to complex, humanitarian emergency situations;

(w) Notes the significant organized voluntary repatriation movements that have taken place so far in 1992 and urges both States and UNHCR to facilitate this preferred durable solution, particularly for movements scheduled to take place in the latter part of 1992;

(x) Expresses appreciation for the note on Voluntary Repatriation Programmes (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.19) and asks that further such notes continue to be provided on a regular basis to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters;

(y) Urges the High Commissioner to continue her efforts along the broad lines described in document EC/SC.2/56, Bridging the Gap between Returnee Aid and Development, to involve international, national and intergovernmental development agencies, as well as non-governmental agencies, in the planning phases for voluntary repatriations so as to ensure that basic reintegration assistance provided by UNHCR to returnees is complemented by broader development initiatives focused on the areas of return and requests that the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters be kept informed at its inter-sessional meetings of developments in this regard so as to be able to pursue related issues;

(z) Encourages the High Commissioner to continue to maintain transparent and responsible management of the Office's resources, both human and financial;

(aa) Urges the High Commissioner to keep the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters regularly informed of issues related to international procurement, given its important relationship to the timely implementation of refugee programmes;

(bb) Notes the High Commissioner's Public Information Strategy as presented in document EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.10, and asks that the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, in the course of its inter-sessional meetings, give further consideration to this important subject.

2. Environment

33. The Executive Committee,

Recognizing that sensitivity to environmental issues must also characterize the humanitarian work of UNHCR,

Convinced that the whole spectrum of the Office's activities on behalf of refugees, from emergency assistance to the achievement of durable solutions to their plight, need to take into account relevant environmental considerations,

(a) Expresses appreciation for the document on Refugees and the Environment (EC/1992/SC.2/CRP.20) which sets out UNHCR's strategy for incorporating environmental concerns into its activities;

(b) Welcomes the High Commissioner's initiative to appoint an Environmental Co-ordinator who will be responsible for developing guidelines and taking other measures for incorporating environmental considerations into UNHCR's programmes, with particular attention to the impact on the environment caused by the presence of large numbers of refugees, especially in Least Developed Countries;

(c) Asks the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters to explore further the financial implications of UNHCR's environmental policy, including the extent to which General Programmes can incorporate environmental concerns and ways of funding specific, refugee-related environmental projects.

J. Provisional agenda of the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee

34. The Committee adopted by consensus the following provisional agenda for the meeting of the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of Officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. General debate.
5. Programme, financial and administrative matters.
6. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the forty-fifth session of the Executive Committee.
7. Any other business.
8. Adoption of the draft report of the forty-fourth session.
9. Closing of the session.

K. Government observer participation in 1992-1993

35. The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the applications of the following Government observer delegations for participation as observers at its sub-committees, as well as the informal meetings of the Executive Committee during 1992 and 1993:

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Butan, Cameroon, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Djibouti, El Salvador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Honduras, India, Iraq, Ireland, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Myanmar,

New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.

L. Interpretative Declarations or Reservations relating to the Conclusions and Decisions of the Committee

A. 1. General Conclusion on International Protection

36. Regarding Part III A (1), paragraph 21, sub-paragraphs (p) and (q), the delegation of Colombia stated that:

"The debate regarding the categories of persons of concern to UNHCR has not ended, and that in 1991, the Working Group on Solutions and Protection had concluded that it was impossible to extend the mandate of UNHCR to include certain categories of persons such as victims of natural disasters, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, economic refugees, etc.. For this reason, the Executive Committee is not yet ready to take a decision in this area. Flexibility in the interpretation of UNHCR's mandate must have due regard for the limits of the Office's own functions and the mandates of other United Nations and intergovernmental organizations."

Regarding sub-paragraph (s), the delegation stated that:

"It would be preferable to eliminate the clause "from the outset of a refugee problem" or to make clear that UNHCR's primary task consists of providing protection and not seeking repatriation."

Opening Statement
by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
at the forty-third Session of the Executive Committee
of the High Commissioner's Programme

(Monday, 5 October 1992)

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this forty-third session of the Executive Committee. And may I extend a special welcome to the delegations of Hungary and Ethiopia. Their presence here, at their first regular session of the Executive Committee, is symbolic of the global nature of refugee concerns during this historic period of change.

A special word of thanks is due to the outgoing Chairman of the Executive Committee, Ambassador de Riedmatten who has guided us through a year that has stretched our capacity to its very limits, both in the areas of operations and policy formulation. Warm congratulations also go to our newly elected Bureau. I know, Mr. Chairman, that my Office can count on you and your colleagues for support and advice during the months ahead as we continue our voyage in the uncharted waters of this post-Cold War world.

Mr. Chairman, the months since we last met have been turbulent ones indeed. As the international community continues to grope for a new equilibrium, a staggering three million people have been forced to flee in search of safety, while another million and a half refugees have returned home voluntarily. A rapid succession of crises have generated demands and expectations on my Office on an ever-increasing scale.

Nowhere is this more tragically illustrated than in Africa. In Somalia, internal chaos, bloodshed and famine have left my Office struggling to provide assistance to over a million Somali refugees - almost twenty per cent of the Somali population - who have sought asylum in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen. I welcome the signing of the General Peace Agreement on Mozambique yesterday. However, despite this encouraging development, the exodus of refugees into Malawi and Zimbabwe has gathered new momentum in the context of the drought. It is alarming to note that only a fifth of the urgently needed food supplies have actually arrived in a region ravaged by the worst drought in fifty years. Meanwhile in West Africa, some 800,000 refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone continue to stagnate without a solution in sight. Human misery deserves the same attention wherever it occurs, but clearly does not receive it always. We are striving towards a broader international focus in our public information strategy so that the silent refugee situations are not lost in oblivion.

Africa, Mr. Chairman, has no monopoly of crisis. Ambassador de Riedmatten has eloquently reported to you on the situation of 265,000 refugees from Myanmar who have, for the second time in little more than a decade, flooded into neighbouring Bangladesh in an area itself prone to natural disasters. I continue to work closely with the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to overcome the impasse

on their return to Myanmar and to ensure an international presence in Myanmar which can help provide the degree of confidence necessary for a safe and voluntary return. Further north, in Nepal, an influx of asylum-seekers from Bhutan have required a strengthened UNHCR presence and a series of emergency response measures.

In contrast to South Asia, refugee problems in South-East Asia have receded as repatriation to Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia gain impetus. Over 30,000 Vietnamese have now returned home voluntarily within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan of Action, while the outflow from Viet Nam has dropped to a negligible level. Although much still needs to be done to address the situation of those who remain in first asylum countries, I believe we are entering the final chapter of the saga of Indo-Chinese refugees.

Similarly in Central America, continued progress towards durable solutions within the framework of CIREFCA has made this a region where returnees today outnumber refugees. With the reintegration of returnees moving into the developmental phase, we hope by next spring to hand over the process to UNDP. The Peace Accord concluded in El Salvador in early 1992, despite some implementation problems, has further consolidated the reconciliation process. The launching of the first phase of a Plan of Action for repatriation to Guatemala in February, and the establishment of a UNHCR presence in the major returnee areas mark a significant step towards solving Central America's major remaining refugee problem.

I remain preoccupied however at the situation in Haiti where the political stalemate, combined with a deteriorating economy and biting sanctions, have kept alive the risk of a major outflow. I renew my call to all governments in the region to maintain an open, humanitarian policy of admission for those who are compelled to flee.

Turning to the Middle East, we have virtually withdrawn from northern Iraq with the end of the refugee crisis. Nevertheless I am gravely concerned that the impasse on the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Iraqi Government, the deteriorating situation in northern Iraq and the onset of winter could lead to new outflows of Kurdish refugees. I have discussed with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs the urgent need to preposition food and fuel for the winter and to examine cross-border operations in order to avoid or mitigate this eventuality.

Mr. Chairman, the industrialized world has been forcefully reminded this past year that refugees are not a marginal phenomenon of a distant third world. Europe has again become a major theatre for refugee movements, bringing full circle the history of my Office. Over 2.6 million persons have been displaced or are under siege as a result of the terrible conflict in the former Yugoslavia. It has given new immediacy to the refugee issue in Europe, and fresh impetus to the debate on novel approaches to the protection of refugees and displaced persons and the prevention of refugee flows. No crisis has so tested our capacity to respond nor our ability to innovate. We have launched a comprehensive humanitarian response for victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which was broadly endorsed by the international ministerial meeting which I convened on 29 July 1992.

Such is the uncertainty of the present situation, so little known the laws of its chemistry, that we can as yet have no idea of the precise limits of the forces unleashed by the abrupt dislocation of international relations. In some extreme instances, the breakup of States has ensued; in others the breakdown of meaningful government. In such a context, the dynamics of displacement have taken on new proportions and added complexity, as refugee flows become increasingly bound up with the ethnic, cultural and religious fault lines which cut through many of the world's States. Indeed, ethnic conflict is a common denominator in many of the refugee problems confronting us today.

It was against this complex background of hope and hazard that you will recall, Mr. Chairman, I launched my strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions last year. These twelve months have given us ample opportunity for its pursuit. They have also given a new dimension to UNHCR's role and responsibilities, as humanitarian action increasingly becomes a part of the wider agenda for peace and stability in a rapidly changing world. While welcome in many ways, it undoubtedly confronts us with new challenges, risks and dilemmas. It is in the light of all those experiences and concerns that I would like to share with you, in **six points**, not only what we have achieved, but also the lessons we have Laurent and what more we must do.

1. Enhancing emergency response

I would like to begin with my goal of strengthening UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity within the framework of reinforced inter-agency cooperation and partnership with donors and non-governmental organizations. As you know, we have taken a number of measures to establish emergency response teams, diversify our emergency training and stockpile basic relief supplies. Stand-by arrangements have also been established with a number of experienced NGOs for the secondment of staff. On a number of occasions we have tapped the rich pool of skills offered by the United Nations Volunteers programme, and I hope that we can further develop that cooperation. These new arrangements have played a key role in our ability to respond to recent crises in Kenya, Mauritania, Yemen, former Yugoslavia, Bangladesh and Nepal.

However, our effectiveness in emergencies is being determined not only by our readiness and capacity to act, but also by the prevailing security situation. As humanitarian emergencies show an increasing tendency to erupt in the midst of armed conflict, UNHCR has found itself more and more having to provide protection and assistance to the displaced and the distressed in conditions of insecurity and anarchy. Volatile and hazardous conditions in parts of Africa, Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia have jeopardized the delivery of relief and the safety of my staff and others, including those of NGOs. The recent loss of lives of United Nations and relief officials in southern Sudan is yet another tragic reminder of the price we have had to pay this past year to uphold humanitarianism in diverse and dangerous situations around the globe. I want to pay a warm tribute to the courage and commitment of all those who continue to keep the relief pipeline open at considerable

risk to their personal safety. I would particularly like us to remember here today all our colleagues in UNHCR, the United Nations system and among NGOs and other organizations who have lost their lives in that effort.

May I add, Mr. Chairman, that at the request of UNHCR, a meeting on security matters was held at the level of the United Nations system. It resulted in a number of concrete recommendations which we have begun to implement.

In the face of emergencies on an unprecedented scale, we have had to turn on occasion to the military for logistical support. It has given a new dimension to humanitarian operations as well as to the role of the military in the post-Cold War era. When peace and compassion replace war and destruction, when the enormous logistical capacity of the military is channelled into non-political, humanitarian purposes, in cooperation with Governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs, I believe we all stand to gain.

2. Meeting the Challenge of Solutions

My second point, Mr. Chairman, and one which I have repeatedly made, is that emergency response to refugee situations must be coupled with energetic political initiatives to promote solutions which can allow the safe and voluntary return of refugees. I am pleased to report that 1992 has been a year of repatriation for 1.5 million refugees. However, just as refugee influxes have become increasingly challenging, so too the returns have tended to be more complex and precarious.

Hopes of rapid repatriation have been set back in Mozambique, Liberia and South Africa by widespread drought, food shortages, persistent conflict and political confrontation. Although over 60,000 refugees have returned spontaneously to Angola, fragile security and the presence of large numbers of mines continue to slow down the progress on solutions. Lack of adequate funding in the early stages hampered our ability to organize repatriation to Angola but that is now being overcome as some funds come in. We have also made arrangements for the voluntary repatriation of Barundi refugees from Tanzania. We are closely involved in the negotiations and activities under the auspices of the OAU on a solution for Rwandese refugees. The will to establish peace and democracy which has manifested itself in these and other parts of the African continent holds out the hope for large-scale repatriation in the future.

The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates in most graphic form the difficulties and uncertainties of repatriation today. Over one million refugees have returned to Afghanistan so far this year from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, conditions of extreme volatility and widespread insecurity in Afghanistan are seriously affecting the funding and implementation of urgent reintegration and rehabilitation measures. I have already alerted the Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General Eliasson that unless all agencies and donors are vigorously and urgently mobilized, we may have another humanitarian catastrophe on our hands with the onset of winter.

Repatriation, Mr. Chairman, is a difficult undertaking, often of greater political and operational complexity than emergency response. The potential for solution can easily become the seed for disaster in the face of premature return of refugees to insecure and unsatisfactory conditions. Planning and preparation are important, but the key lies in innovation and flexibility, as our operation in Cambodia shows. Within the framework of the Paris Peace Agreement of October 1991, some 130,000 Cambodians have returned to date, mainly from Thailand. Barring a major set-back, we expect all the Cambodian refugees in Thailand to be home by early 1993, in time to participate in the planned national elections. In order to meet this deadline, however, assistance options have had to be modified to take account of the lack of available, mine-free land for returnees. Although unresolved tensions in Cambodia create an element of uncertainty, I am optimistic that the sustained political will of the international community will secure the process of reconciliation and the long-term future of the returnees.

In line with our constant, yet innovative, search for solutions, we have launched a new initiative in south-eastern Ethiopia, which abandons the traditional distinctions between refugees, returnees and affected population. In a cooperative effort with other United Nations and non-governmental organizations, UNHCR has "crossed" its mandate to assess and address the needs of the entire community with the goal of stabilizing the population. It is a drastic and desperate measure to break the vicious cycle of exile, return, internal displacement and exile again in an area of chronic under-development, drought and instability. It is prevention and solution at the same time.

These repatriation operations underline the crucial importance of quick-impact development projects in the context of repatriation to bridge the gap between relief and longer-term development. We have made significant progress in this area in the past year, together with UNDP and other agencies, within the framework of the International Conference on Central American Refugees. The lessons Laurent in that part of the world are now being applied in Cambodia through the early introduction of quick-impact projects for the reintegration of returnees.

Much remains to be done, however, to give greater priority to incorporate returnees and their communities into national reconstruction and development efforts. The respective roles and responsibilities of the agencies at the various stages of the relief-to-development continuum need to be further clarified and dovetailed. Indeed, this is an area where there is an acute need for better inter-agency coordination. The extent to which the international community is able to meet the development challenge will affect our ability to maintain the impetus in repatriation and to provide genuine and lasting solutions to refugee crises.

While the pursuit of solutions through voluntary repatriation is a fundamental part of my strategy, we must not overlook the continued need for resettlement of refugees whose lives or fundamental well-being would otherwise be in jeopardy. With the proliferation of refugee situations around the world, the need for resettlement places have grown, though in absolute terms the numbers are still very limited. We rely on the continued

generosity and commitment of the international community to accept those who are in urgent need of resettlement. I take this opportunity to call for an early response to our recent appeal on behalf of detainees being released in former Yugoslavia.

3. Developing Prevention

Let me now turn to the third point of my strategy: prevention. In our efforts to seek innovative and flexible solutions to refugee problems, we continue to emphasize preventive efforts to attenuate the causes of refugee flows and contribute to averting them.

Given the close links between serious violations of human rights and refugee flows, we have sought to reinforce our contacts with the human rights sector of the United Nations system, and are participating actively in the preparations for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. We have also, together with other organizations and with the help of some Governments, stepped up our training and advisory activities as a part of the institution-building effort throughout Eastern Europe and in the CIS countries in order to preempt and manage the problems of massive displacement.

Most significantly, we have undertaken increased initiatives to provide protection and assistance to displaced populations within countries of origin, notably in former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka and the Horn of Africa. We have broken new ground in former Yugoslavia in many respects, not least in using preemptive assistance as an important tool for preventive protection. The airlift to Sarajevo and the road convoys that my Office has organized for the stricken population of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been valuable not only for transporting relief, but also in terms of confidence-building and protection monitoring.

Our experience in former Yugoslavia convinces me that international presence is an essential element of prevention. While the precise beneficial impact of presence is difficult to quantify, and while it may not always succeed in preventing forcible displacement, it nevertheless allows for international monitoring of humanitarian treatment and can have a restraining effect.

Like solutions, prevention must be applied with imagination and flexibility to each situation. Thus, in the context of the Somali crisis our preventive activities have taken the form of supplying food, tools and essentials from Kenya, where UNHCR is based, to areas up to one hundred kilometres inside Somalia itself, so that people do not feel compelled to cross borders in search of humanitarian assistance. My Office is coordinating this cross border infusion of aid from Kenya as part of a comprehensive United Nations plan to accelerate relief efforts into the war-torn country.

Cross-border operations to affected populations, as in Somalia, have serious implications in terms of resources, and in order to be effective, require the full cooperation of the agencies, the acquiescence of the parties

concerned and the wholehearted commitment of the international community. Protection and assistance to the internally displaced, as in Yugoslavia, can be successful only to the extent that their safety can be assured and an early solution found to their plight, both of which are dependent on the political will of the parties involved. Thus, prevention is a promising strategy, but it has its limits. It is not a substitute for asylum but rather a supplement.

4. Strengthening Protection

This brings me to my fourth point on the strengthening of international protection. Protection, Mr. Chairman, is not an adjunct to my three-pronged strategy; it is the basis for it.

The focus of protection has traditionally been on the refugee's needs from the time of flight until the attainment of a durable solution. However, the sheer size, scale and complexity of contemporary population displacements have placed serious strains on this orthodox approach to refugee protection, weakened international solidarity and, at times, seriously endangered the principle of asylum. Whether in the context of ongoing strife in Somalia, insecurity and famine in Mozambique, ethnic tensions in Myanmar or violent conflict in former Yugoslavia, questions have arisen as to the extent of the burden that countries of asylum can reasonably be expected to sustain. They have highlighted the urgency and importance of a coherent, principled, yet flexible framework for international protection which safeguards the fundamental principles and premises. At the same time, it must take account of current realities and allow UNHCR to play a creative role, not only in addressing the problems of refugees, but also in tackling the refugee problem. And, in the contemporary situation, I am convinced that the former is impossible without a serious commitment to the latter.

With this objective in mind, I set up an internal Working Group, chaired by the Director of International Protection, to recommend a strategy for strengthening international protection in the 1990s. The results of that Working Group have been presented to the Executive Committee in the Note on International Protection. I hope the Committee will endorse the new thrust which the Note describes and which underlies many of the current activities of my Office.

The Note does not seek to redefine UNHCR's mandate nor to extend its competence to new groups. It seeks rather to take account of the existing realities of my Office's activities and affirms UNHCR's readiness to play a clearly defined role in the prevention and solution of refugee problems. Let me reiterate, however, that the new protection focus on the country of origin is not a substitute for the well-established humanitarian obligations towards refugees and asylum-seekers. The institution of asylum must be preserved and efforts continued to establish efficient and fair procedures which ensure that valid claims to refugee status are duly and expeditiously recognized. At the same time, we must show sufficient flexibility, as indeed we have done in South-east Asia and Central America, to develop concerted and comprehensive regional arrangements to meet the specific problems of displacement in the different parts of the world.

A regional arrangement, which combines the commitment to provide protection to those who need it, with clear policies for immigration and development assistance, as well as a coherent information strategy, could be helpful in formulating an appropriate response to the problem of mixed movements of refugees and migrants in Europe. We need to give more thought to tailoring such a comprehensive regional approach in Europe. I hope that the rationalization of UNHCR's priorities, structures and resources in Europe, which we began last year, will help to strengthen our ability to engage Governments and other actors in a fruitful dialogue to this end.

5. Building partnership

It is evident that the magnitude of the challenges clearly exceeds the capacity of UNHCR alone. Whether we speak of prevention, protection or solutions, coherent and comprehensive strategies demand a vigorous renewal of UNHCR's partnership with Governments, other United Nations agencies and international, regional and non-governmental organizations.

The very nature of the common challenges we face are drawing us all together. Rarely has the Office enjoyed such close cooperation of, or received such strong encouragement from Governments. I am deeply grateful to all of you for the extraordinary support which you have extended to my Office, whether diplomatic or political, financial or human.

Turning now to international organizations, our close operational links with our sister agencies, particularly WFP and UNICEF, and with IOM are invaluable. As you know, I had the privilege of addressing the UNICEF Executive Board in June this year. Unfortunately, Mr. Grant's schedule made it impossible for him to accept my reciprocal invitation. Our collaboration with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs continues to evolve positively, while our relations with ICRC are gaining new depth as we find ourselves increasingly operating in areas of conflict.

Last but not the least, let me pay a warm tribute to the large number of deeply committed NGOs who spearhead so many aspects of refugee operations, often under the most difficult of conditions. I met many of you last Friday. Your efforts in providing assistance and advocating protection are indispensable, while your constructive criticism keeps us on our toes. I look forward to developing our cooperation further.

The multitude of actors on the scene makes the question of coordination ever more crucial. Coordination, however, is not a panacea. It requires considerable investment of time and effort and cannot, in any circumstances, substitute for the individual or collective capacity of agencies. Nor should we, in our pursuit of improved coordination, lose sight of unique mandates and specific expertise of the various agencies. The objective of coordination should be to enhance such comparative advantages. I would further suggest that the operational coordination of complex humanitarian emergencies is best addressed through the lead agency concept - a role which has appropriately fallen to UNHCR in refugee or refugee-like situations, as in northern Iraq and now in former Yugoslavia.

Partnership, Mr. Chairman, must engage not only governments and organizations but also public opinion, especially at a time when disturbing trends of racism and xenophobia are becoming evident in some parts of the world. UNHCR is stepping up its public information campaign to build greater support for the humanitarian values and traditions for which this Office was created. I urge all political leaders and opinion-makers to join us in combating the forces of intolerance against refugees and asylum-seekers.

6. Managing resources

My sixth and final point, Mr. Chairman, is on the preoccupation which we all have about resources. Greater challenges bring with them greater management requirements for funds, programmes and human resources.

To do more with less is the lot of many of us in today's world. Yet, as I said at our meeting in June, unlike some other United Nations agencies, my Office has very little scope to be selective in assuming its responsibilities. We cannot avert or avoid them when a new refugee crisis occurs and the international community urges us to act. What we can and must do is to constantly look at ways of better managing and utilizing our resources.

One year of unprecedented need has been followed by yet another. Against global needs of US$ 1.1 billion, we have received US$ 751.9 million as at 29 September. I am very grateful for the contributions, and particularly appreciate the widening of our donor base. Nevertheless, I must appeal strongly to our so-called "traditional" donors, to maintain, at least as a minimum, their contribution at a time of increasing needs. Furthermore, I plan to undertake a number of personal initiatives later this year to diversify the sources of governmental funding. Encouraged by the significant increase in private funding, I am pursuing numerous initiatives in this area - in close consultation with NGOs and in full understanding of their concerns.

I am deeply grateful for the generosity of our donors, but I am also very mindful of our responsibility to manage the funds as effectively as possible. As operational challenges become more complex and demanding, we need to continuously reassess our programmatic approaches and related management and monitoring systems. Our capacity, and that of our operational partners, for prompt, yet thorough needs assessment and programme design has to be markedly improved, so that the effectiveness of our programmes can be measured against clear objectives. In the course of the coming year, I intend to undertake a number of steps to enhance UNHCR's programming skills. I am determined that our efforts to strengthen our financial accountability - on which the Deputy High Commissioner spoke to you last Friday - should be matched by a parallel improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of our programme delivery.

Such measures should also help us to respond better to the needs of the majority of our refugees: the women and children. The "people-oriented" training activities on which we have embarked are geared to providing the staff with the understanding and tools to incorporate the guidelines on

refugee women more effectively into our programme design and implementation. Thanks to the generosity of the Norwegian Government, we now have a Coordinator for Refugee Children to help us increase our awareness of the special needs of refugee children. I hope greater emphasis can be placed on developing educational opportunities for refugee children, so that they are better able not only to cope with the trauma of exile but also to face the future when they return home.

Better programming should also include a more ecological approach in our delivery of protection and assistance to refugees. At the Rio Summit I pledged UNHCR's full support for the Declaration on Environment and Development. The global responsibility which we all share requires UNHCR to ensure that environmental damage in and around refugee camps is kept to a minimum, and to cooperate in repairing it, if and when it does occur. A policy framework has been proposed in the conference room paper on the subject. In order to further its implementation, I hope that resources can be found to enable us to appoint a coordinator on environmental issues as we have done for refugee women and children.

Good management of funds and programmes is closely linked to the issue of human resources. The spate of emergencies confronting UNHCR in the past two years has placed a tremendous burden on our staff. I am proud of the way in which UNHCR staff have risen to these challenges. However, if we are to maintain the same standards of competence and commitment, we must manage our human resources more carefully and creatively. In a constant struggle to respond to emergencies and other priority programmes, staff are being pulled out of one operation to fill another or hurriedly recruited, in a manner which is to the satisfaction neither of the staff's career aspirations nor of the goals of sound management. Piece-meal approaches must be replaced by a coherent policy which takes into account the role and responsibilities confronting UNHCR today as the leading refugee organization in a turbulent world. I intend personally to undertake a qualitative review of UNHCR's staffing requirements, and devise a human resources strategy which would permit UNHCR to respond meaningfully and efficiently to the challenges of the post-Cold War era.

I should also mention that in order to further improve the status of women in UNHCR and thus ensure a better use of our resources, we have adopted guidelines for sound affirmative action to redress the gender imbalance. The guidelines are now being translated into a concrete plan of action.

Mr. Chairman, the six points of prevention, preparedness, protection, solutions, partnership and resources represent in a nutshell the tremendous challenges with which we are confronted, and the path we must pursue to overcome them.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by recalling that two years ago, my predecessor, Mr. Stoltenberg spoke to this Committee of his ambition to see the issue of movement of people placed on the international political agenda. Today, it is undoubtedly there. I welcome this development. It is through political initiatives that the root causes of displacement can be addressed. It is through political agreement that durable solutions to

refugee problems can be attained. Humanitarianism can create space for political action but it can never be a substitute for it.

As humanitarian action becomes dynamically linked to peace-keeping and peace-making, for UNHCR the challenge is to maintain the issue of refugees and displacement on the political agenda while, at the same time, preserving our non-political and humanitarian approach. For political bodies, the challenge must be to support humanitarian action, while resisting the temptation to use humanitarian avenues to overcome political hurdles. Nor must political action jeopardize the speed, efficiency and neutrality of humanitarian aid. Close coordination between political bodies and humanitarian agencies is needed to ensure that due account is taken of the capabilities as well as limitations of humanitarian work.

Mr. Chairman, when the Cold War so abruptly and unexpectedly came to an end, many had hoped to reap immediately the fruits of the new warmer political climate. Time has shown the fallacy of those expectations. We must remain attentive to the dangers, lest they engulf us, and alert to the opportunities, lest they escape us. The past year has been full of the contradictions of the new era in which we are living. But it is with a sense of responsibility and feeling of satisfaction that we continue our work. Sense of responsibility because of the vital importance of humanitarian action in the post-Cold War era. Sense of satisfaction because of the cause and people we are serving - and because of the knowledge of the many voluntary returns we have seen this year.

We are stretched to the limit but with the extraordinary support which the international community and this Committee have given us, we are determined and prepared to continue on our humanitarian course. I thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.